

# Exploratory Project for Economic Alternatives

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MEMO

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

TO: Arch Gillies, David Hunter

FROM: Gar Alperovitz, Jeff Faux

RE: Strategy for public education and final phase of research

We are now entering the final phase of our research on alternatives and are planning for the first expansion of the public education effort. This memo summarizes our future plans, timetable and budget.

## I. MAJOR TASKS

### A. Completion of research

Research remains to be completed in several important areas. They are:

- restructuring the financial sector of the economy;
- strengthening individual rights in a community based, publicly controlled economy;
- community and national planning to reconcile guaranteed jobs with ecological balance;
- financing community and public ownership;
- international consequences of a new American economy.

Some of this will be done by contracted experts.

We must also begin the process of having outside commentators review the completed basic draft. We will be engaging experts in economics, politics, the environment, social organization and other fields to comment on the logic, accuracy and soundness of the draft.

The review process will take place in two rounds. We will hold initial intensive consultations with thirty to forty experts on the basic draft. After these comments are integrated into the revised draft, and all outstanding research is completed, we will ask the sample of experts for another, less intensive, round of comments before the report goes to publication.

## B. Beginning the debate

The public education effort will begin well in advance of publishing the report. In the early fall we will begin a series of in-depth discussions with people who have direct access to the national media. These include newspaper, magazine and TV journalists, political figures, minority and feminist leaders, labor leaders, concerned business people, and consumer and environmental advocates.

We have already had conversations with a number of such national figures who have been publicly critical of the drift of America toward a greater concentration of political and economic power. We will now go back to them and to additional people (25 to 30 in all), with the first full draft of our report. We will not only ask them for comment, but more importantly challenge them to begin now to talk publicly about solutions which are large and bold enough to address the problems that they have been so eloquent in exposing.

Financial supporters of the project will be asked to take an active part in this effort, if they wish to.

We also plan to hold discussions with fifty or more community and political activists who can tell us to what extent our proposals make sense in their world and to roughly the same number of people representing minority, ethnic, regional and other parts of the American population.

EPEA has files on people in all of these categories gathered from our direct conversations, newspaper clippings, research, inquiries about the project and recommendations. Consultant Derek Shearer is sifting through these lists and will be adding new names through discussions he will be holding this summer with a wide network of people. An initial tentative list will be prepared by September 1.

## C. Publicity and Distribution

Detailed plans must be made for the maximum publicity and widespread distribution of the report. How ambitious these plans should be will depend in part on the results of our two rounds of review and discussion of the drafts. If, as we hope, we meet with an enthusiastic response, we will consider using the release of the report as the basis for a



national organizing campaign around these issues. We will also consider getting the immediate endorsement of citizens' organizations, labor union,s community leaders, church groups, etc. A campaign to help develop a strong grass roots movement to pressure political leaders to accept the proposed immediate reforms in such a way as to set the stage for larger reconstruction of the economy is a strong probability.

The organization of a group of prominent people and organizations to endorse the report and/or to use it themselves to initiate national debate is a probability.

The relationship of such a group to the project will depend in part on how fully they wish to endorse it, and in part on what is the most effective way to generate debate. It may be that the best way is to have the group endorse the principles and introduce the EPEA report as a "first draft" or "working paper" of a program for a new society. This would also emphasize our concern with broad, democratic debate in contrast to "elite" policy formulation. People can accept, reject, amend or substitute entirely different ideas, but, as in any discussion, it is important to have the debate begin with some suggestions.

At the time of the first press conference announcing the report we plan to have 10,000 copies ready for distribution to individuals and organizations. They will be sent to a mailing list of journalists, political figures, organizers, and others.

## II. TIMETABLE

The schedule for the next 18 months of the project is as follows:

### July 1 - October 15

- \* contract remaining research
- \* complete basic draft for review
- \* prepare lists of people:
  - a) for circulation of basic draft
  - b) to help introduce ideas to national media
  - c) to work on follow-up local and national organizing projects
  - d) who might publicly endorse EPEA proposals
- \* completion of primary fund raising

October 15 - January 15, 1975

- \* review of basic draft for substantive and political sense
- \* initial approaches to media people
- \* complete major research tasks

January 15 - March 15, 1975

- \* revise basic draft on basis of first round comments and completion of research
- \* expand media contacts
- \* make decisions on distribution
- \* make decisions on scale and direction of public education strategy
- \* completion of public education fund raising

March 15 - May 15, 1975

- \* second round review revised draft
- \* continue media contacts

May 15 - June 30, 1975

- \* complete final draft -- to publisher

June 30, 1975 - January 1, 1976

- \* publisher prepares galleys, publicity campaign
- \* organize for public education, TV, magazine articles, etc.
- \* organize for political impact -- arranging for use of materials by unions, League of Women Voters, etc.
- \* obtain endorsements -- possibly setting up commissions to hold community hearings after release
- \* preliminary backgrounders to selected press

January 1, 1976

- \* release of report on economic alternatives for America

### III BUDGET

At present, EPEA has enough funds to continue operating its existing staff until June 30, 1975. To complete the program described above we need an additional \$195,000 - \$220,000 for the following purposes:

-- \$60,000 for completion of research (approximately one-half for outside consultants, and one-half for coordination, fees and travel in connection with review of the draft by experts). The first \$30,000 is needed by August 15, 1974 so that research contracts can be made in time to complete our schedule. The remaining \$30,000 is needed by October 15, 1974 to begin the review of the basic draft by experts.

-- \$85,000 for public education efforts from October 15, 1974 to June 30, 1975. This includes hiring coordinators and paying travel expenses and fees to those consultants and reviewed who require them.

-- \$50,000 to \$75,000 for publicity, organizing and public education efforts between July 1 and December 30, 1975. This is our judgment of what it would take to do a respectable but modest effort at organizing during the period after the report is finished and before it is released. The funds will primarily support a reduced "core" EPEA staff, travel and consultants. Should the decision be made to launch a major public education effort, this would, of course, require a new budget strategy.

### IV. POST PUBLICATION--JANUARY 1, 1976 and beyond

Depending on time, money, interest and public reaction following the publication of the report, the project is considering possible "follow-up" activities to stimulate debate. These would all be dedicated to organizing a public education program during 1976. They might in part be tied in with the Bicentennial, but would not be based on it alone, nor dependent on it.



Depending on interest and public reaction , the group of prominent people may be involved in these activities; either directly or possibly through the establishment of a new organization that seems appropriate.

The kinds of public education activities we are considering include:

-- regional and local hearings sponsored by citizens' groups (League of Women Voters, churches, municipal leagues, etc.), by universities, and others at which people could testify and discuss ways in which they would like to see the economies of their community organized and how and what kind of national economy that would imply;

-- a series of educational booklets describing the need for citizens to deal with the larger issues in our economy, offering our proposals as one set of suggestions and stimulating others to do the same;

-- a petition campaign aimed at getting a very large number of signatures demanding that Congress begin to restructure the economy. The petition would have to be a clear, simply worded document showing that there are large numbers of Americans who would seriously support a long term program based on planning, public ownership and community control;

-- conferences of foundations, universities, and government agencies to encourage further research and analysis of issues touched on in the report;

-- discussion with business and labor groups to define more clearly where their personal and institutional interests diverge and coincide with the ideas developed by the project;

-- discussions, local meetings, national conferences, etc., with religious leaders and others interested in a renewal and reaffirmation of American values, and the reconstruction of social life based on economic arrangements which sustain the community rather than destroy it. These discussions would also include educators and members of the "helping professions";

-- development of TV media materials combining EPEA's notions with the experience thus far with the use of public TV. (We have come across a number of efforts in states and localities across the country in which public TV has been

used effectively to stimulate citizen discussion on important issues);

-- development of a speakers' bureau of people who have been involved with the project to address groups on the subject of alternative institutions;

-- sponsorship of research on key questions involved in restructuring which are identified by the national debate;

-- development of specific interest group materials, and a newsletter on a nonpartisan basis -- suitable for use by voters as well as political candidates and parties at all government levels.

When we began to talk to others about the project two years ago, we met with considerable interest -- and considerable skepticism. Many people acknowledged the need for change but doubted that we could get people to talk seriously about long term alternatives to the present economic system. The system seemed too entrenched. The project was a long shot.

Since then the odds have changed dramatically. The sense of crisis is more widespread every day. Standards of living are eroding everywhere. Problems that used to be confined to the poor -- paying for food, clothes and decent housing -- are increasingly problems of the middle class. Surveys show that the general public is more pessimistic about the future than at any time in the last forty years. Words like "depression" and "economic collapse" are becoming common on the business pages.

X As a result, the project and its sponsors have a unique opportunity to help change the course of our future.

Twenty one foundations have now contributed to EPEA. Their contributions have supported research, interviews, the hiring of political and technical consultants, a library on alternatives and a widening network of people working on

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fundamental change in our society. The task at hand is to finish the work and to get it out. We need to start the debate before -- as one person said to us recently -- events overcome us all.

| Unlike two years ago, there is now little question that we will have an audience.